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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5340
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3068
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2933
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3584
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3639

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000772

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: BERDIYEV'S CONTINUE TO SEEK
RECOMPENSE FOR NIYAZOV-ERA ABUSES

REF: A. 08 ASHGABAT 1472

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 598

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 644

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Following up on recent information that the Berdiyevs were under virtual house arrest, with security police not allowing them to leave and forbidding visitors, Political Officer made an unannounced visit to the Berdiyev's home on June 19. There was no sign of security officials in the area and Political Officer had a lengthy discussion with the Berdiyevs while seated on their veranda. Mr. Berdiyev seemed recovered from his May ordeal with the security police and talked non-stop about the 1998 injustices wrought by the KGB against him and his wife and their subsequent attempts to obtain compensation. Mrs. Berdiyev said President Berdimuhamedov's sister, a former colleague of hers, has raised her case with the President and she expected his decision during the next few weeks. Following the meeting, at Mr. Berdiyev's request, Political Officer dropped Mr. Berdiyev off at a nearby outdoor market. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On June 17, a local contact informed Post that Bazargeldi and Ayjemal Berdiyev's home was under surveillance by officials from the Ministry of National Security (MNB), and that the couple was not allowed to leave and visitors were not allowed to enter the home. (NOTE: During the past six months, the couple has been in contact with Post to explain their efforts to obtain compensation from the government for Niyazov-era injustices, and to ask for Post's assistance by advocating for them with the government (reftels). END NOTE.) The Berdiyevs live on the ground floor of a high-rise Soviet-era apartment block. A gated area with a roof extends out from the building, covering a veranda and parking area. Upon arrival, Political Officer found Mrs. Berdiyeva and another woman seated on the veranda. They called Mr. Berdiyev from inside the apartment, who came and opened the gate, which was locked with a padlock. From the veranda was an unobstructed view of the inner courtyard, a large area with parking, ringed by several high-rise apartment blocks. Political Officer and Embassy driver noticed no sign of a security service presence on the approach to or around the building and Political Officer

arrived at the Berdiyev's apartment without any hindrance. When asked about the alleged presence of security officials, the Berdiyevs gestured vaguely at the courtyard and beyond and said their movements were being watched. They did not recount any incidents in which visitors were stopped. They said their son had been stopped by an unknown person, whom they said was MNB, when driving his car nearby. However, the son "was a good driver" and got away.

13. (C) Unlike during a previous visit, immediately after his four-day detention in May (Ref C), on this day, Mr. Berdiyev was voluble, talking virtually non-stop about his case and demand for government compensation. He explained that he was a wealthy businessman during the late 1990s, owned one of the few foreign luxury cars in the city at that time, and had even traveled to Germany to accompany former President Niyazov during one of his trips for medical treatment. Mr. Berdiyev said a gang of MNB officials had targeted him because of his wealth. He then described his various efforts since that time to obtain compensation for their property and maltreatment, which left Mrs. Berdiyeva handicapped and in need of medical treatment to this day. According to Berdiyev, the MNB officials who trumped up charges against him and seized his property were all arrested and imprisoned following the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov. Over the years, his applications and appeals to the government have gone unaddressed. Regarding his latest four-day detention, Mr. Berdiyev said he was taken to various locations, always hooded, struck repeatedly, and told to stop complaining and stop contacting the UN and OSCE. He said at times he was left in cells with drug addicts and homeless

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people. Many of his cellmates were from the provinces and had been picked up because they lacked a local residence permit. Such people are easy to spot on the street because they have no place to stay and look disheveled and unshaven. According to Berdiyev, the officials take the nonresidents' money or, if they have no money, detain them until they can contact relatives and pay.

14. (C) A couple times when Mr. Berdiyev stepped away, Mrs. Berdiyeva shared her own thoughts. She said that prior to the injuries she sustained during her ordeal in 1998, she was a medical professional and was an acquaintance of current President Berdimuhamedov. According to her account, when he was Minister of Health, she approached him and asked if he had forwarded her letter of complaint/request for compensation to President Niyazov. Berdimuhamedov allegedly told her that on the advice of other ministers he had torn up the letter. Mrs. Berdiyeva went on to say that the President's sister, a former colleague of Berdiyeva has brought the Berdiyev's case to the President's attention recently and she expects a presidential decision in the coming weeks. She also mentioned that the government will not allow her to leave the country for medical treatment. One year ago, she said they had located a sponsor to help her obtain treatment in Germany, but that the government twice did not allow her to purchase a plane ticket.

15. (C) COMMENT: While it is likely that there is more to the Berdiyev's case than meets the eye, their account of their ordeal in 1998, their detainment, the physical abuse of Mrs. Berdiyev with lasting injuries, and the loss of their property is credible. Nevertheless, they finally admitted to poloff recently (ref C) that the story they had spun for months of receiving compensation letters from the UN or the International Court in The Hague was fictitious. In talking to the couple, it appears that obtaining compensation for the wrongs they suffered has become an obsession and, having exhausted all other domestic recourse, they look to President Berdimuhamedov and the international community for their remaining hope. At the same time, they spoke disparagingly of the UN, which had not helped them despite traveling to Bishkek to present their case, and the OSCE, which had not responded to a five-page letter that they sent in May. While

it is understandable that the Berdiyev's may feel afraid to leave their home following Mr. Berdiyev's detainment in May, Political Officer did not see anything during the visit that suggested official interference with comings and goings from their home. END COMMENT.

MILES